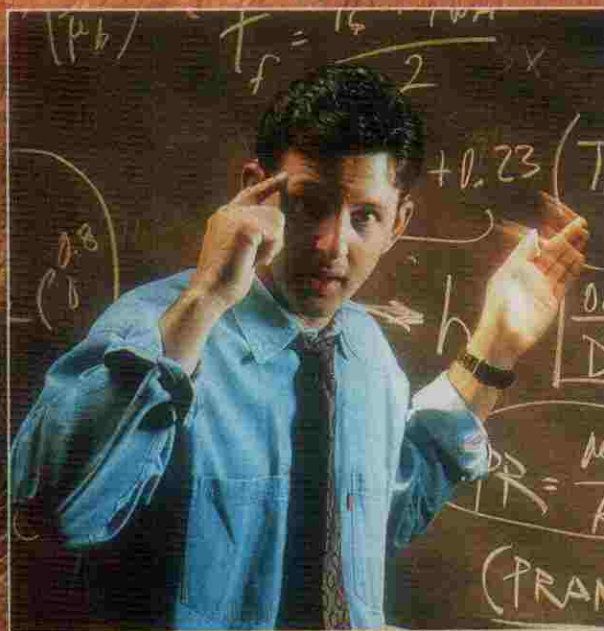


# Renewing the Profession of Teaching:

## A CONVERSATION WITH

How can new teachers, future teachers, and teacher educators prepare for the educational demands of the 21st century? Renowned teacher educator John Goodlad describes the challenges and hopes for revitalizing the teaching profession.

Carol Tell







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# JOHN GOODLAD

A leader in educational renewal, John Goodlad has published widely on school reform, including *The Nongraded Elementary School* (1959), *A Place Called School* (1984), and *Educational Renewal* (1994). Currently a professor at the University of Washington and the president of the Institute for Educational Inquiry, Goodlad first formed his ideas about education growing up in rural Canada and then teaching in a one-room schoolhouse.

Influenced by John Dewey's concepts of progressivism, Goodlad has been an obstinate yet optimistic voice of humanistic ideals through several decades of school reform. Recently Goodlad spoke with *Educational Leadership* about the teacher shortages, his centers of pedagogy, the changing mission of schools, and the ways in which new teachers and teacher educators can prepare for the next century.

**Statistics tell us that in the next 10 years, the United States will experience enormous teacher shortages. How can teacher educators best deal with these shortages?**

The problem provides an opportunity for a fundamental redesign of the way we prepare teachers. I have argued for a long while that we need a core of highly prepared teachers. For example, we pay dearly for the number of children who move into higher grades without being able to read. Teachers who teach reading in the primary grades take, on average, one and one-half courses in teaching reading. That training is just enough to know how to group students and what the materials are. It is not enough to be able to diagnose a reading

problem and take care of it.

This teacher shortage could provide an opportunity to prepare a few head teachers—at the doctoral level in mathematics or reading, for example—to work with a team of teachers at the primary level. Some career teachers would be part of that team, too, and every team might take on a cluster of neophytes or interns who are coming through the teacher education program. But if we try to prepare enough teachers to address shortages in the same way we've always done it, we will open the gates for all sorts of unqualified people. We'll pay for it for years to come.

We could also increase the number of teachers if we could manage to bring about a greater collaboration between the arts and sciences faculty and schools of education. The schools of education do not attract that many students, but the arts and sciences do—sometimes 50 percent of their students become teachers, and yet many of these students don't prepare initially to be teachers. If they were recruited into a teacher education program, and if teacher education developed the role of professional development schools—we call them *partner schools*—I envision highly prepared people working with teams of neophytes, particularly in that internship year.

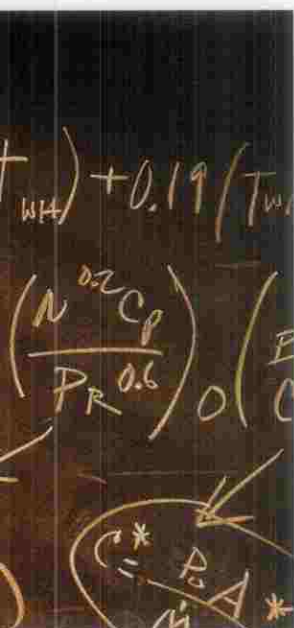
**Describe your centers of pedagogy. What is their role in preparing the teachers of the future?**

In our work, we have both post-baccalaureate programs and five-year programs. The five-year program meets all the undergraduate requirements of the university, but teachers also get field experiences, take reflective seminars and some basic studies, and decide whether they want to be teachers. Montclair State University has the first doctoral program specifically geared to prepare teachers at a high level to be head teachers.

But this clustering idea of teaching teams is foreign, and professional associations have not encouraged it enough. Unfortunately, we still cling to the idea that we must have one fully certified teacher in every classroom—instead of thinking of alternatives. Maybe 80 youngsters could have a head teacher, a couple of career teachers, and a group of interns. If we move in that direction, we can have quality teaching and learning. If we move in the usual direction, we will not have quality because we will open the admission gates too wide.

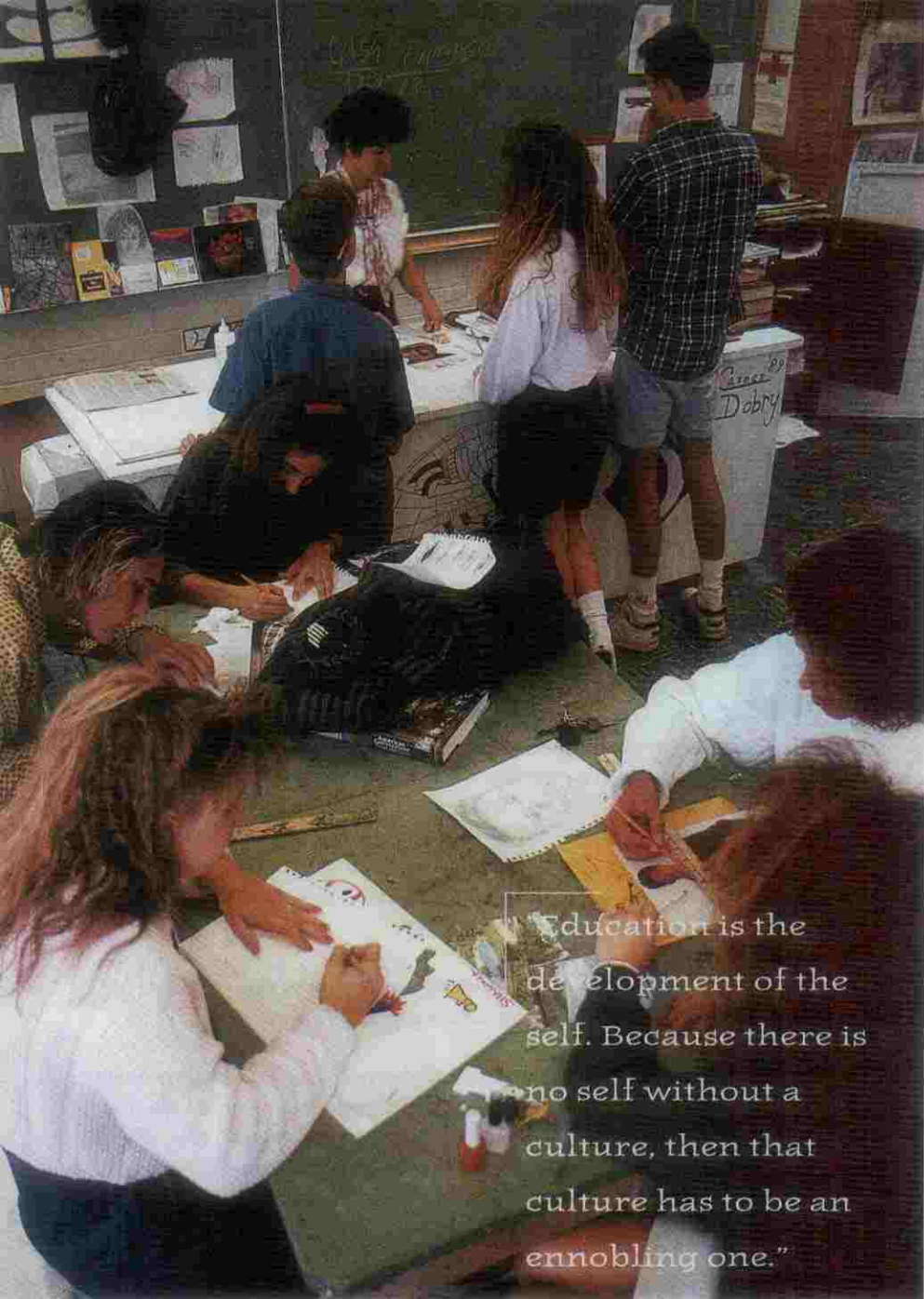
**What changes—both good and bad—have you seen over the years in preparing new teachers?**

In the last decade in particular, we have heard many calls for change in how we should go about preparing teachers. The zenith of this was *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (1996). This fine report, from the National



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Education is the development of the self. Because there is no self without a culture, then that culture has to be an ennobling one."

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*You write in Educational Renewal (1994) that we must focus on educating students for civitas, or human goodness. Why do you think we haven't focused on these ideals as much as we have focused on instrumental purposes for education?*

The question you are asking is really, What is the fundamental mission of schooling? This, of course, is the most difficult. In my book *A Place Called School* (1984) and in the late Ernie Boyer's book *High School* (1983), we both came to the same conclusion; in fact, each of us has a chapter with the exact same title, even though we didn't communicate with each other. The title of the chapter is "We Want It All." When we really push parents to think about what they want out of schooling, they want academic development, social development, civic development, vocational development, character development. They want it all.

Something very significant happened in our movement from an agrarian to an industrial to a highly technological society. Children became useless. Prior to our current era, children *were* useful, and the idea of schooling was not accepted because children worked—first on the farm, and then in the factory. With industrialization and unionization, children were no longer desired in the workplace. And by moving from a 90-plus percent agrarian society to a 3 or 4 percent agrarian society, children were useless on the farm.

What would we do with children then? Put them in school. During the Great Depression, school enrollments shot up. Because the main function of schooling was then custodial, we did not worry much about what we were educating children for. We wanted them safe; we even were interested in their character development.

What has happened now—brought forward by *A Nation At Risk*—is that schools are supposed to advance a global economy and make us competitive. *A Nation At Risk* suggested that schools were failing in this regard. Of

Commission on Teaching and America's Future, agrees with much of what our group has recommended in our National Network for Educational Renewal.

But when it comes to implementing actual change, the idea of the professional development school is breaking new ground. It's hard to believe that in a century of school reform reports, teacher education was not mentioned until 1986. In 1986, the Carnegie Commission on the Economy and the Holmes Group came out with a strong recommendation of connecting teacher education and schooling. Now that connection is under way.

The other major change is the close

collaboration between the arts and sciences and the education departments. Most coursework of a future teacher is completed in the departments of arts and sciences. People blame our schools of education for the poor test scores of teachers in their subject fields, for example, but they don't realize that schools of education are virtually not allowed to teach in content areas. The arts and sciences have to take responsibility when teachers don't know their math or English or biology. We require all participants in our work to establish these connections inside the university and with schools.



course, that was nonsense. But a funny thing has happened in the process. We have convinced the American people that their kids must prepare for the high-tech economy of the future, and therefore they've got to be highly trained in math and science. What have we done? Children are now an investment once more. What is dominating schools today is what Neil Postman calls "the narrative of economic utility." Our kids are part of our economic utility system.

Try to get a moral concept built into that! We have a tough, tough challenge. If that youngster is an investment in the future—and math and science and high test scores are the entry to that future—then how do we bring in character development, moral development, civility, and *civitas*?

***And it seems that the public wants measurable results. But how can we measure civility, for example?***

Most people have lofty goals for education. They talk about developing citizens, responsible workers, and good community members. But as your question implies, these ideals are very difficult to appraise, in part because we think we don't have a common set of values. The problem is that successful marks, grades, and test scores do not correlate with any of the virtues that we set for the young. So we can measure fairly accurately whether a youngster is able to manipulate numbers, whether a youngster is able to read and write. But when it comes to civility, developing a test to be used in large quantities is a challenge.

If we would move our attention away from thinking only of outcomes and think of conditions, then we could start examining whether the conditions are democratic, whether the conditions are caring, whether the conditions provide equity. I use a simple analogy: If you discover that in the population there's a great number of respiratory problems—colds, influenza—you might want to look at the conditions under which people are living. And if you provide for better conditions, you can't guarantee

that people won't get sick. But you move a long way toward a healthier population.

In our system, we receive test scores without having the faintest idea under what conditions students worked. For instance, we heard a lot about how the U.S. ranked so poorly in international tests. Why didn't we go study British Columbia, which is so much like us, and find out what students did to score better than we did? But we just blame the teachers and the schools; we have always used the villain theory.

I'm not against looking at outcomes, but we've got to shift our attention to

"All my life I've asked, Why do we organize schools in this way so that they resemble no other institution in the world?"

the conditions that connect with the outcomes we want. Currently, what we're measuring does not correlate with our stated aims of education. We mouth them at commencement addresses and forget all about them.

***What would it take to change the public perception of the mission of schools?***

Changing the mission of schooling is a monumental process. First of all, we need political leadership. My colleagues and I edited a book, *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*, in 1991. That book went to the White House, was passed around, and someone decided that they wouldn't pay any attention to it because what in the world did moral development have to do with schooling and education? So we didn't get very far in the political arena.

Second, we need resources. Given the wealth of this country, the paltry way that we treat schooling is pretty sad. You can walk into schools all over the United States and find that they're ill prepared in regard to the materials they have, ill prepared in the preparation of their teachers, and functioning in inappropriate facilities. A literary figure once

said, "I buy books and when I have bought all the books I need, then I think about food and shelter." We should think of education as vital and spend our tax dollars accordingly.

It's interesting that we don't really value education highly in this country. We value schooling. Schooling is a political entity subject to changing manipulations. That is, we value most an instrumental process whereby we prepare children to meet and accept adult values. Today, a growing adult value is the degree to which the child is in the right school, ensuring the future economic value of the family.

***Do you see positive signs for the future of education?***

About a decade ago, friends would say, "John, you've always been such an optimist about public education." Of course, my answer is that being an educator and being a pessimist are incompatible.

Several years ago, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. described United States political history in 30-year cycles. He predicted that in the decade of the 1990s, we would begin to see a shift from a cycle of selfishness to a cycle of sacrifice. We would be more worried about the environment, more worried about one another. And lo and behold, that seems to be happening. Communitarian movements, largely rhetorical thus far, at some point will infiltrate into community action. We're getting new kinds of groups talking about civil communities. Those signs are very encouraging.

I don't know whether we will be able to develop an infrastructure for our schools and for other human and health services to reflect these changes. But people are getting annoyed with how many things are being removed from human action—you know, dial 1 if you want this, dial 2 if you want something



else. The banking industry was absolutely dumbfounded by a study that they sponsored, the results of which were reported a couple of years ago. The bankers thought people wanted more efficiency, quicker tellers. They discovered that people wanted more human contact from their banks. I think we're going to find out that technology is not going to bring us wisdom.

We must pay attention to what we are building in the infrastructure. It isn't jobs that we need; it's good work. We must have jobs that satisfy. This idea that we can find good work in the human sector—in the community sector—is a fascinating area in which to move. The first part of the 21st century could be very exciting.

***Along with communitarian efforts, there has also been a greater interest in spirituality and education.***

Seymour Sarason points out that the loss of community is often accompanied by an increase in spirituality. I interpret this to mean that people have to identify with something, and as they lose their identification with community, they turn to spirituality. They turn to divine guidance when they don't feel that they're getting earthly guidance here.

There's something to that; there is also a positive side. If we look at all the great religions of the world down through history, they conclude with the same set of values—divine values. If we look at all the great philosophical thinkers of the world, who talk about the kind of behavior we need to practice here on earth, they come up with the same principles. We actually have a rational and a divine idiom coming together. That's what we need to work toward—coming together around basic principles even while we maintain sectarian, religious differences, even



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**"Teachers need freedom—freedom to make professional decisions."**

nationalistic differences. I don't suggest we can have a world order, but I do think we're going to have to agree on a set of human principles, a set of qualities that identify us all as humans and tie us together. That's the great challenge of the 21st century.

***How did your early life in rural Canada and your experiences teaching in a one-room school-house influence your ideas about teaching and learning?***

I cannot help but wonder what would have happened to me if my school had succeeded in doing what they wanted to do with me at the end of my 1st grade. I brought home a report card, not knowing what was in it, and my parents were blown away. I had been flunked.

Apparently, I had been reading quite a bit before I went to school. By the time I was halfway through the 1st grade, I would come home and read the primer—but my parents noticed that I was turning the page in the wrong places. I had the primer memorized, so I quit reading. The teachers at that time used phonetic approaches to reading, which I found to be absolutely silly. I'd go to the chalkboard, and here was a word I knew I could read, but I had to break it down into these little pieces. I have a rebellious nature at times, and I just rebelled against reading as it was being taught.

Furthermore, my best friend at school was the one who was truant most often. I would come home and talk about this youngster with admiration, and my father would say, "Do you really want to be like him?" I would think about it and say, "Well, no, I guess I don't," but if I had been flunked, I probably would have been.

My father went down to school and had a conference with the principal and the teacher. The principal agreed that I would be promoted, and my father said, "We'll take full responsibility, and we will not blame the school if things go wrong." My 1st-grade teacher said, "But no good will come of it!"

The next year, I flourished. In those days, we had a system where if you ranked first in your class, you sat in the front seat (what *should not* happen, of course). The classroom was a 2-3 grade combination, and I always sat in the front seat. So at the end of the year, instead of staying in that class, I went into a 3-4 combination. By midyear I was doing 4th grade work—a year ahead. Had I spent two years in the 1st grade, I would have had the non-nourishing diet served twice, with the



second helping being a warmed-over version of the first.

***What lessons did you carry over when you became a teacher in a one-room schoolhouse?***

Well, my first morning of teaching, before school opened, I covered the chalkboards—front, side, back—with information because I had no books. I had to lay out work for eight grades, 34 students. I rang the bell outside the door, and the students all came in. One boy, Ernie, to whom I dedicated a book years ago, had been in the same seat for seven years.

I realized immediately that my students were encountering the very same experience I encountered as a youngster—exactly the same conditions. All my life I've asked, Why do we organize schools in this way so that they resemble no other institution in the world? Why is it that children can't talk to other children, except on the playground or outside? Why is it that the teacher out-talks children in the classroom? Why is the dialogue teacher-to-child or child-to-teacher—never child-to-child-to-child? And, are we never to learn a better alternative to the long-standing pass or fail system?

I've spent my life looking at these issues, all the time believing that we need to quit monkeying around, quit using children as investments, quit making schools instrumental. If we educate the individual self, then the future will take care of itself.

***What advice would you give to new teachers?***

Well, I'd have to first give the advice to teacher educators. Then I'd carry that advice over to the beginning teacher. John Steinbeck said it in *East of Eden*: Get your eyes set on where you're going and then look to your feet, lest ye stumble. Our research shows that teachers are not prepared to know where they are going or where they should go. In our program, we take educators and immerse them in a four-fold mission of schooling: enculturate

them into a democracy; expand their engagement in the human conversation; provide careful pedagogical nurturing and training; and offer good moral stewardship of the schools. Teachers then see themselves as different—as professionals and not just as instrumentalists or mechanics in the classroom.

Teacher educators also have to prepare new teachers to be good crap detectors. New teachers are deterred from what they believe in when they have all this stuff—crap, if you will—dumped on them. And an administrator or a teacher who runs off after this fad or that fad often forgets what the journey's all about.

Back in the days when we had a commissioner of education, we had

the larger issues in education. Education is not an instrument to achieve some goal—that automatically demeans the role of education. Rather, education is the development of the self. Because there is no self without a culture, then that culture has to be an ennobling one.

I would like to have helped lift the profession of teaching out of where many people in political life have tried to keep it—as a kind of servitude, where we can push teachers around. I'd like to have raised the idea of being a teacher from a robotlike business—a mechanical position requiring very little preparation—into a profession of high demand and high expectation. A profession in which you always have to be learning more.

***“When it comes to implementing actual change, the idea of the professional development school is breaking new ground.”***

educational goals that leading educators in the United States could rise to and accomplish. A few of our Department of Education Secretaries have done great jobs—Secretary Terrel Bell and Secretary Richard Riley are examples. But where's the great educator? We need educational leadership in high places. Instead, teachers are being pushed this way and that way—to phonics one day, to standards the next—and I think this destroys the profession. Teachers need freedom—freedom to make professional decisions. As long as we continue to force teachers to implement strategies from above, we will not get good future teachers entering the profession.

***You've contributed so much to teacher education over the past several decades. Talk with us about the “John Goodlad legacy.” What accomplishments are you most proud of?***

Well, that would be close to what we have been talking about: a hope that some people have been made aware of

At the same time, I'd like to be sure that education continues to be the right of all children. That has been my defense of the public school. I don't agree with those educators who say that the public school is all but dead. The public school is endangered—highly endangered. But education is an inalienable right that the public school can best uphold.

So those two things—one, trying to raise the level of what teaching is all about; and two, trying to keep public education available for everybody. Advancing these goals has been my mission. ■

**John Goodlad** is Professor of Education and Director of the Center for Educational Renewal, College of Education, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98103. **Carol Tell** is Associate Editor of *Educational Leadership* (ctell@ascd.org).



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